

The decision by Sinclair Broadcasting Group to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry "documentary" as a "news" story days before the election is a clear violation of the public trust they hold as licensees of the airways - as well as but another example of the dangers to our democracy of media consolidation.

A fundamental condition of use of the public airwaves, free of charge, obligates a licensee BY LAW to serve the public interest. However, when large companies, such as Sinclair Broadcasting Group control these airwaves, we Americans get far more of what's good for their bottom lines, rather than what is in the nation's interest - and needed for a healthy democracy.

Instead of something produced at some "News Central" far removed geographically, it is more important that we see real people from our own communities - or at the very least regions - and more substantive news about issues that matter, presented in a truly balanced way. This patently is NOT the case with Sinclair (or, for that matter, by the GOP's national broadcast arm, Fox).

Sinclair's actions amply demonstrate why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not to weaken them. They also demonstrate why the license renewal process needs to involve far more than merely a returned pro-forma postcard.

Finally, we must reintroduce the "Fairness Doctrine". Showing suggestive images on television poses no threat to this nation's survival; using the public airways to disseminate political propaganda in the guise of "news" does.

Thank you.